

SOUTH DELTA WATER AGENCY

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June 2, 2003

See Attached Mailing List

Re: California's Future Water Supply

California's Department of Water Resources has now adopted a policy regarding California's future water supply. This policy will have major future consequences for the economy, the water supply, the food supply, and the national security of both the State and the Nation. The policy was adopted behind closed doors without any analysis or public discussion of its potential future consequences. The policy is discussed in the attached letter from Alex Hildebrand (South Delta Water Agency) to Jonas Minton, Deputy Director of California's Department of Water Resources.

Please call me if you have any questions or comments.

Very truly yours,

Alex Hildebrand

Enclosure

Mr. Mike Wade, Manager
John Herrick, Esq.
Honorable Dianne Feinstein Honorable Dennis Cardoza
Honorable Ken Calvert
Honorable Richard Pombo
Honorable Michael Machado
Honorable Charles Poochigian
Honorable Barbara Matthews
Honorable Alan Nakanishi
Honorable Guy Houston
Honorable Greg Aghazarian
Honorable Dave Cogdill
The Record Newspaper
Modesto Bee Newspaper
Sacramento Bee Newspaper
Los Angeles Times Newspaper
Fresno Bee Newspaper
Contra Costa Times Newspaper
San Francisco Chronicle
Mr. Bill Pauley, President
San Joaquin Farm Bureau Federation
Mr. Willard Thompson
Mr. Steve Schaffer
Ms. Lisa Beutler
Ms. Jeanne Duncan

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June 2, 2003

Mr. Jonas Minton, Deputy Director
Department of Water Resources
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Jonas:

On May 28 you informed a subgroup of the California Water Plan Advisory Committee that the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the Secretary of Resources had that morning adopted a policy for California's future water supply. You informed us also that this policy would be the governing basis for further preparation of California's Water Plan, Bulletin 160-2003.

You stated that it was a three-part policy. First, that an adequate future urban water supply would be provided. Second, that the environment would be protected. And third that agriculture would be "preserved". You explained that the water that the policy commits for urban and environmental purposes would be made available in large part by using various means to reduce the water available for use in producing food and other essential farm products. You stated that this would never the less achieve the objective of "preserving" agriculture because agriculture would be able to continue at some level with a reduced and declining water supply.

California's population is expected by state forecasters to increase about 50% in 25 years. With 50% more people California will need 50% more food. DWR contends, however, that the planned reduction in the farm water supply that will be available for consumptive use in growing food should not be a concern. But DWR cites no credible evidence that it is technically feasible to grow food for this increased population with an annual agricultural water supply that is reduced by millions of acre feet. DWR is presumably aware of credible forecasts that there will be one billion more people worldwide in 20 years that will need to import food. Future reliance on a net import of food would be precarious. California's agricultural water supply will soon have been reduced by about 2 1/2 million acre feet to provide water for other uses, and it will be reduced much more in the future under DWR's policy.

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The Water Code (Section 10004.6) requires that the Water Plan provide for replacing the unsustainable overdraft of groundwater with a sustainable water supply, but the policy ignores this. That overdraft is about two million acre feet on a long-term annual average and six or eight million acre feet during a drought. Since DWR's policy makes no other provision for replacing this overdraft as it becomes unsustainable, the effect of the policy will be a further reduction of millions of acre feet in the water available to grow food in order to avoid any loss to urban and environmental water supplies.

California now produces about 25% of the nation's table food. Other states assume that this will continue. AB 2587-2002 required that the Water Plan address the future water supply that would be needed to maintain this proportionate contribution to the nation's food supply with domestically grown food. DWR's water policy makes no provision for this. Furthermore, there appears to be no intention to notify USDA or the public of California's intent to phase out California's ability to produce that food as a result of the decision not to maintain and increase California's agricultural water supply.

DWR states that it will not consider any storage facilities to capture and retain river system water that now flows to the ocean in excess of established outflow requirements. The only exception is to be consideration of CALFED's five surface storage studies. However, those proposals are primarily for purposes other than increased water supply. They are alleged to have a potential water yield of no more, and probably less than one half million acre feet. This is only a small fraction of the decrease in agricultural water supply that has already occurred, and none of it is committed to agriculture.

You stated that the DWR policy is firm and will govern state planning, but that we should feel free to disagree with it. That is the purpose of this letter. The DWR policy is contrary to California law and will be a disaster for our children. It should be reconsidered in a public process.

Please call me if you have any questions or comments.

Very truly yours,

Alex Hildebrand

AH/dd

cc: Mr. Mike Wade
John Herrick, Esq.
Honorable Dianne Feinstein Honorable Dennis Cardoza

Mr. Jonas Minton, Deputy Director

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